

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 423

September 14, 1995, 11:33 a.m.
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WELFARE REFORM BILL/Strike Reward for Reducing Illegitimacy

SUBJECT: Family Self-Sufficiency Act of 1995 . . . H.R. 4. Jeffords amendment No. 2581 to the Dole modified perfecting amendment No. 2280 to the committee substitute amendment.

ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 37-63

SYNOPSIS: As reported with a committee substitute amendment, H.R. 4, the Family Self-Sufficiency Act of 1995, will overhaul six of the Nation's ten largest welfare programs.

The Dole modified perfecting amendment would strike the provisions of the committee substitute amendment and insert in lieu thereof substitute provisions, entitled "The Work Opportunity Act of 1995."

The Jeffords amendment would strike the Dole amendment's provision that would increase a State's family assistance block grant by 5 percent in fiscal year (FY) 1998, FY 1999, or FY 2000 if in any of those years it decreased its illegitimacy rate by 1 percent below its FY 1995 rate without increasing its abortion rate. If it achieved a reduction of 2 percent or more it would receive a 10 percent increase. (Family assistance block grants would be created by the Dole amendment as a discretionary, temporary assistance program to replace the AFDC welfare program.)

Those favoring the amendment contended:

The Jeffords amendment would strike a new entitlement from the bill that would distribute funds unfairly if it were to succeed, though we believe it could not possibly succeed. Basically, the entitlement would be for any State that cut its illegitimacy rate without increasing its abortion rate. We do not agree with the logic of giving such an award. A State that achieved this objective would presumably then have a smaller, not a larger, need for welfare. While it would be desirable to have a lower illegitimacy rate, we disagree that the way we should achieve it is by unfairly giving greater welfare benefits to States that reduce their number of welfare recipients. Additionally, we object to creating a new entitlement. If every State were to succeed, as much as \$1.6 billion would have to be given by the year 2000. However, the biggest problem with this new entitlement is that there would be no way of knowing if it succeeded, because it would be given based on inaccurate abortion statistics. There is no uniform basis for reporting the number

(See other side)

YEAS (37)		NAYS (63)		NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (10 or 19%)	Democrats (27 or 59%)	Republicans (44 or 81%)	Democrats (19 or 41%)	Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Campbell	Akaka	Abraham	Helms	Biden	
Chafee	Baucus	Ashcroft	Hutchison	Bingaman	
Cohen	Bradley	Bennett	Inhofe	Boxer	
Hatfield	Breaux	Bond	Kempthorne	Bryan	
Jeffords	Dodd	Brown	Kyl	Bumpers	
Kassebaum	Feingold	Burns	Lott	Byrd	
Packwood	Feinstein	Coats	Lugar	Conrad	
Simpson	Ford	Cochran	Mack	Daschle	
Snowe	Glenn	Coverdell	McCain	Dorgan	
Specter	Harkin	Craig	McConnell	Exon	
	Hollings	D'Amato	Murkowski	Graham	
	Inouye	DeWine	Nickles	Heflin	
	Johnston	Dole	Pressler	Kerry	
	Kennedy	Domenici	Roth	Levin	
	Kerrey	Faircloth	Santorum	Lieberman	
	Kohl	Frist	Shelby	Nunn	
	Lautenberg	Gorton	Smith	Pryor	
	Leahy	Gramm	Stevens	Reid	
	Mikulski	Grams	Thomas	Rockefeller	
	Moseley-Braun	Grassley	Thompson		
	Moynihan	Gregg	Thurmond		
	Murray	Hatch	Warner		
	Pell				
	Robb				
	Sarbanes				
	Simon				
	Wellstone				

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Buisiness
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

of abortions in a State. Some States attempt to collect reliable statistics; some States extrapolate from hospital abortion rates; some States just make estimates. Many States claim abortion rates that are lower than they really are because many abortions, for various reasons, are never reported. If we were to use 1995 as the base year, States would start from an uneven footing. Those States with accurate, higher statistics for 1995 would have an easier time of qualifying for the entitlement; other States would have to struggle to reduce actual abortion rates to their reported 1995 levels. They would likely try such measures as restricting access to legal abortions. They would also likely try to get women to cross State lines for abortions in order to lower in-State abortion rates. Further, even as a State's official, reported number of abortions declined, its real abortion rate would likely increase, as women turned to abortion methods that are not generally reported, such as so-called morning after pills. Both pro-life and pro-choice groups support the Jeffords amendment. Catholic Charities, which is certainly a pro-life group, supports the amendment because it fears that States would slash benefits to welfare mothers in an attempt to reduce illegitimacy. Pro-choice groups fear that States would try to restrict access to abortions. We agree with both groups, and thus support the Jeffords amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

The Jeffords amendment would strike the only provision in the Dole amendment that would address in a substantial way the problem of illegitimacy. That provision would reward States that were able to reduce their illegitimacy rates without increasing their abortion rates. No State would be required to do anything, and no State would be punished for failing to reduce its illegitimacy rate without increasing its abortion rate. States would have total discretion in how they went about achieving this goal. No one should object to this language. We have yet to hear any Senator speak favorably of illegitimacy, and all Senators, both pro-choice and pro-life, say that they wish to see the incidence of abortion decline.

By this point in the debate Senators should be familiar with the statistics on the harm that comes from illegitimacy. Children brought up without the benefit of two parents are six times as likely to be poor as are other children. They are two to three times as likely to have emotional and behavioral problems. They are also more likely to drop out of school, become pregnant as teenagers, have health problems, abuse drugs, commit crimes against others, and even commit suicide. A father is important for financial support, but is clearly more than a paycheck--in every respect, children do better in two-parent households.

The dramatic increase in out-of-wedlock births is a chief cause of welfare dependency. Welfare, as currently constituted, augments and perpetuates this dependency with a vicious intergenerational cycle. Children have illegitimate babies and turn to the welfare system in a failed attempt to become "independent." When their babies reach their teen years, they in turn have illegitimate babies and end up on welfare. Each year the problem grows. By the year 2000, it is estimated that 40 percent of all births in America will be illegitimate. This problem must be addressed soon, or there will be no families left to tax to support the broken, dependent, single-parent families. Success is not certain, but it is more likely if the efforts are made at the State level. Circumstances in our various States and localities vary too widely for any single one-size-fits-all strategy from Washington to succeed in lowering illegitimacy. Accordingly, the Dole amendment would reward those States that decreased their illegitimacy rates and kept them down. States could look beyond welfare reform--they could pursue educational reforms, tax reforms, enterprise zones, and similar measures to build self-sufficiency that might have the incidental effect of lowering illegitimacy rates. How they responded would be up to them.

This incentive system would work in exactly the opposite manner as the current incentive system, which provides more and more support as States increase their welfare dependency rates. Those rates, in practice, have been closely tied to illegitimacy rates. Our colleagues have warned that the Dole amendment could have significant costs. We instead believe it would result in tremendous savings. More than \$5 trillion has been spent on means-tested Federal welfare programs since their inception. The driving and escalating force behind those benefits has been the rise in the number of illegitimate, destitute children. If illegitimacy is not reduced, we will have to spend a great deal more than \$5 trillion over the next 30 years to deal with the consequences. The "as much as \$1.6 billion" in the year 2000 that could be spent to reduce illegitimacy pales in comparison to the trillions of dollars in savings that would accrue if the States succeeded in getting illegitimacy rates back to the 1960 level of 5.3 percent.

Most of our colleagues' arguments against this provision of the Dole amendment are based on the fact that it would not give benefits to States with rising abortion rates. They have conceded that illegitimacy should not be reduced by increasing the number of abortions (in keeping with the latest pro-choice slogan that abortions should be safe, legal, and rare), but they have insisted that numerous practical problems would be created. We disagree. State legislatures have grappled with the issue of abortion for two decades, and are not about to make major changes on this issue which affects all of their citizens simply to receive a bonus for their welfare recipients. As for reporting requirements, any type of data collection effort, whether on abortion rates or any other subject, is going to create some expenses. If a State were to feel that it would have difficulty meeting the reporting requirements in the Dole amendment, it could simply not meet them--the Dole amendment would not punish a State for not trying to get a bonus payment.

Now that the family cap provision has been stricken by the Domenici amendment, the only remaining provision in the Dole amendment that confronts the issue of illegitimacy directly is the provision that would be stricken by the Jeffords amendment. This provision is easily one of the most important parts of this reform bill. We therefore strenuously oppose the Jeffords amendment.